

Message Text

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 NEA-10

EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /077 W
----- 020870

R 171722Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5694

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 16023

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UK

SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE: ON THE FRINGE
AND BEYOND

REF: LONDON 15839

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SUMMARY: PARTY ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF THE FORMAL AGENDA GAVE DELEGATES A WIDE DIET OF TOPICAL INTEREST AND SIGNIFICANT PERSONALITIES. OUTSTANDING WAS THE CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL CENTER LECTURE DELIVERED FOR THE FIRST TIME BY A NON-POLITICIAN, ALASTAIR BURNET, EDITOR OF THE DAILY EXPRESS. OTHER MEETINGS WERE SPONSORED BY THE BOW GROUP, TOPY REFORM GROUP, MONDAY CLUB AND CONSERVATIVE ACTION GROUP ON ELECTORAL REFORM. YOUNG CONSERVATIVES ALSO SPONSORED LECTURE BY REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGUESE SISTER PARTY, AND SELF-EMPLOYED FEDERATION, ISRAEL FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE AND SELSDON GROUP WERE ALSO REPRESENTED. END SUMMARY

1. CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE INCLUDED A SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES SCHEDULED DURING LUNCH TIME AND IN EVENING WHICH ATTRACTED MANY CONFERENCE DELEGATES INTO MEETINGS ON TOPICS OF SPECIALIZED INTEREST. FOR FIRST TIME CONSERVATIVES SPONSORED "BAZAAR" AT WHICH REPRESENTATIVES OF SOCIAL SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS AND VOLUNTARY CHARITIES WERE ABLE TO DISPLAY THEIR WARES AND PUBLICATIONS TO PARTY DELEGATES. BAZAAR WAS OPENED BY SIR KEITH JOSEPH, WHO MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE PARTY INTENDED TO ADOPT CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH THESE ORGANIZATIONS THAN IT HAD PREVIOUSLY. THIS EFFORT IS INDICATIVE OF PARTY'S INTENTION BOTH TO PARTICIPATE MORE EFFECTIVELY IN LOCAL AFFAIRS AS WELL AS TO CAPTURE SOME OF POLITICAL CAPITAL WHICH THESE ORGANIZATIONS HAVE POTENTIAL FOR DEMONSTRATING. FURTHERMORE, BAZAAR WAS INDICATIVE OF PARTY'S INTENTION TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INTEREST IN SOCIAL CONCERNS IN FIELDS LIKE HOUSING, CIVIL LIBERTIES, EDUCATION, ETC.

2. VARIOUS CONSERVATIVE ORGANIZATIONS HAD STANDS OUTSIDE CONVENTION HALL AT WHICH THEY DID BRISK TRADE IN THE COUNTLESS MONOGRAPHS, BROCHURES AND TRACTS THEY PRODUCE. PARTICULARLY IN EVIDENCE WAS THE MINI-BOOKSTORE OF THE PARTY'S OWN INFORMATION SERVICE SHOWING THE WIDE RANGE OF USEFUL MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS.

3. THE OUTSTANDING EVENT ON THE FRINGE WAS THE TRACONFIDENTIAL

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ADDITIONAL LECTURE ON POLITICS SPONSORED BY CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL CENTER. TRADITIONALLY, THIS LECTURE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY EITHER SENIOR CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL FIGURE OR A RISING PARTY THEORETICIAN (MARGARET THATCHER SPOKE A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO). THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, THE CENTER PLAYED WITH THE IDEA OF GETTING NON-BRITISH SPEAKER (RONALD REAGAN WAS A POSSIBILITY) BUT FINALLY CAME DOWN ON ALASTAIR BURNET WHO IS EDITOR OF THE DAILY EXPRESS.

BURNET'S LECTURE WAS A MODEL OF IRONY, WIT AND SKILLED
USE OF THE LANGUAGE ON THE TOPIC, "IS BRITAIN GOVERNABLE?"
PRINTED COPIES OF HIS SPEECH, AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR,
WERE IMMEDIATELY SOLD OUT, AND DELEGATES ATTENDING HIS
LECTURE OBVIOUSLY FOUND HIS TALK STIMULATING AND INFORMAT-
IVE. (COPY FMRWARDED DEPARTMENT SEPARATELY.)

4. BOW GROUP AND MONDAY CLUB APPEARED TO HAVE SOMEWHAT
HIGHER STATUS WITH PARTY ORGANIZERS THAN SELSDON GROUP,
WHICH HAD EARLIER COMPLAINED IT WAS NOT BEING ACCORDED
APPROPRIATE FACILITIES AT THE CONFERENCE. HOWEVER,
ADDITIONAL PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO DELEGATES CARRIED ANNOUN-
CEMENT OF SELSDON GROUP MEETING ON DENATIONALIZATION WITH
MP BOYSON AS SPEAKER. BOW GROUP SPONSORED TWO LUNCH TIME

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----- 020982

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5695

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 16023

MEETINGS, ONE WITH PETER WALKER ON EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION AND ONE WITH ANGUS MAUDE ON THE TOPIC, "CAN PARLIAMENT SURVIVE?."

5. TORY REFORM GROUP HAD THREE LUNCH TIME MEETINGS, ALL OF WHICH WERE WELL ATTENDED. WHEN LORD HAILSHAM WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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UNABLE TO ATTEND FIRST MEETING, MP NICHOLAS SCOTT GAVE IMPROMPTU EXPOSITION OF FORMATION OF GROUP AND ITS BACKGROUND. BOTH HE AS WELL AS LATTER TWO SPEAKERS (AGAIN THE UBIQUITOUS PETER WALKER AND WILLIAM WHITELOW) INSISTED THAT TORY REFORM GROUP WAS NOT AN ORGANIZATION TO COMBAT OR OPPOSE MRS. THATCHER. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT MANY OF THE AUDIENCE WERE SKEPTICAL AND DID NOT WANT TO BELIEVE DISCLAIMER HOWEVER FORCEFULLY AND FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED.

6. CONSERVATIVE ACTION GROUP FOR ELECTORAL REFORM (CAER) MET UNDER SCOTT'S AUSPICES WITH PARTICIPATION OF ANGUS MAUDE, ALTHOUGH MEETING DID NOT SUCCEED IN PRODUCING ENTHUSIASM ENOUGH TO PUSH THE PARTY INTO MORE FORTHCOMING POSITIVE OR NEED FOR ELECTORAL REFORM (REF LONDON 15896).

7. SELF-EMPLOYED FEDERATION RECEPTION WAS GRACED BY APPEARANCE OF MRS. THATCHER WHILE ISRAEL FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE RECEPTION HAD ISRAELI EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE IN TOW.

8. FINAL LISTED EVENT AFTER THATCHER SPEECH WAS MONDAY CLUB EVENT FEATURING HARRY WEST ON "LOYALIST" VIEWS. THIS MEETING WAS HERALDED AS SUBSTITUTE FOR OMISSION OF ULSTER AS AN AGENDA TOPIC, THOUGH SOME SIX CONSTITUENCIES HAD SUBMITTED MOTIONS FOR AGENDA CONSIDERATION. (GEORGE YOUNGER SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER ULSTER HAD BEEN DELIBERATELY OMITTED SINCE THE DEBATE MIGHT GET OUT OF HAND AND GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF MOVING THE CONSERVATIVES AWAY FROM BIPARTISAN APPROACH TO NORTHERN IRELAND.) WEST DESCRIBED LOYALIST POSITION IN ULSTER AND CHARACTER-

IZED ACTIVITIES THERE OF LOYALIST OPPOSITION AS "COMMUNIS
INSPIRED." HE EMPHASIZED THAT RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF THE
SITUATION (CATHOLICS VS. PROTESTANTS) WERE LESS IM-
PORTANT THAN IDEOLOGICAL (LOYALTY VS. COMMUNIST-INSPIRED
REVOLUTION). HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE ULSTER
UNIONISTS HAD TAKEN ON ENOCH POWELL IN ORDER TO OBTAIN
GREATER PUBLICITY FOR THEIR CAUSE IN PARLIAMENT AND, BY
OMISSION AT LEAST, INDICATED SOME DISAPPOINTMENT IN
POWELL'S PERFORMANCE IN THAT ROLE. (SUBSEQUENT EVENTS
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IN ASSEMBLY IN NORTHERN IRELAND OVERRAN MOST OF THE
COMMENTS HE HAD TO MAKE.)

9. COMMENT: TORY CONFERENCES HAVE REPUTATION FOR BEING
STANDARD, MANAGED AFFAIRS WITH A HEAVY DOSE OF SOCIALIZING
BY DELEGATES (DRESSING FOR DINNER, ETC.). WHILE BLACK-
POOL THIS YEAR HAD SOME OF THAT, WITH CIVIC RECEPTION
AND TWO BALLS, MOST DELEGATES RESPONDED WELL TO THE
EXHILARATING EFFECTS OF THE FRINGE EVENTS AND THESE WILL
LIKELY GROW IN IMPORTANCE AT FUTURE CONFERENCES WITH A
BENEFICIAL WIDENING OF DISCUSSION WITHIN THE PARTY.

10. THE TORY REFORM GROUP, WHICH EARLIER ATTRACTED A
GREAT DEAL OF MEDIA ATTENTION BECAUSE OF THE IDENTIFICA-
TION OF ITS FOUNDERS AS "HEATH-MEN", SEEMS TO BE ON THE
VERGE OF FIZZLING OUT. WHILE ITS MEETINGS IN BLACKPOOL
WERE LIVELY AND WELL-ATTENDED, THERE WAS LITTLE EVIDENCE
THE GROUP WILL EVER BE STRONG ENOUGH TO PLAY A MAJOR
ROLE IN THE SHAPING OF CONSERVATIVE POLICY, ITS AN-
NOUNCED GOAL. PERHAPS INDICATIVE OF THIS IS THE FACT
THAT PETER WALKER APPLIED FOR BOW GROUP MEMBERSHIP AFTER
BLACKPOOL AND BOW CHAIRMAN HODGSON SAID WALKER IS WITH-
DRAWING HIS FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE REFORM GROUP.

RICHARDSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LEADERS, POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY MEETINGS, MEETING PROCEEDINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON16023
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750361-0297
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751043/aaaabmhk.tel
Line Count: 263
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LONDON 15839
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 APR 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <28 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE: ON THE FRINGE AND BEYOND
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UK, CONSERVATIVE PARTY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006